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THE DIFFUSION PROCESS

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The Rural Sociologists more than any of the other Social Scientists have concerned themselves with a study of the diffusion process--the diffusion of ideas and practices. In addition to the research done in Iowa, major contributions have been made by Wilkening of Wisconsin and Lionberger of Missouri.

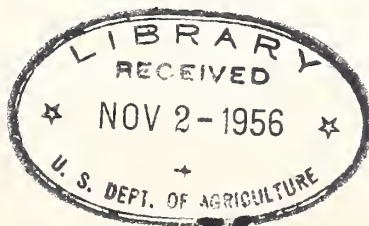
This presentation is an attempt to integrate the research findings of the major studies that have been done to date. Since the field of diffusion research is so broad, all aspects of the diffusion process have not been studied with the same intensity. The area of diffusion is still a relatively new field of research. Many of the findings, therefore, should be regarded as tentative generalizations rather than final conclusions. This presentation is an attempt to bring together and present the findings to date in a consistent usable form.

The focus of this presentation is on the diffusion process from the point of view of the individual whose ideas or practices are trying to be changed. The presentation is not focused on broad social action or mass approach programs. The focus is on the individual, the stages of changes through which he goes, and the communication devices that have impact upon him. This knowledge is essential to the planning of any program of social action.

Diffusion is not a unit act. It is complex social process. Decisions are made only after multiple contacts with the various communications devices of society. This takes time. For instance, the average time span from awareness to adoption of hybrid seed corn was seven years. Later hybrid adoptions have come more rapidly. Integral parts of these contacts with communication devices at the various stages are other persons and mass media. In this presentation: these contacts have been classed in four categories: 1. Mass media (newspapers, magazines, radio and television), 2. Neighbors and friends, 3. Salesman, and 4. Government agencies (professional workers in Extension, SCS, ACP, FHA, FTA and FIA).

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It is recognized that adoption of an idea or practice is a continuous complex process from first awareness to final adoption. For this presentation this process has been broken down into five stages as follows:

1. AWARENESS: at this stage the individual knows of the existence of the idea or practice but has no details concerning it.
2. INFORMATION: at this stage the individual develops interest in the idea and sees its merits. He gathers facts upon which to base decisions in relation to the idea.
3. APPLICATION: at this stage the individual makes mental application of the idea to his own situation, evaluates alternatives, gets information on how to do it and decides whether or not actually try it.
4. TRIAL: at this stage the individual actually applies the idea or practice - if possible on a small scale.
5. ADOPTION: this is the stage resulting from satisfactory trial and leading to continued use.

The roles of the various communicating devices in the process of diffusion are not the same for all types of change. For the purpose of this presentation the types of change have been divided into four categories:

1. Change in materials or equipment without changes in techniques or operations.
2. Change in existing operations.
3. Change involving new techniques or operations.
4. Change in total enterprises.

THE DIFFUSION PROCESS

AWARENESS	INFORMATION	APPLICATION	TRIAL	ADOPTION
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Mass Media</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farm Papers & Magazines. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Greatest impact at this stage. 2. Radio - TV <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. More important than at information stage. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Mass Media</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farm Papers & Magazines. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. Greatest impact at this stage. 2. Radio - TV <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. More important than at information stage. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Neighbors, Friends</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluation <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. All types of change. 2. How and When 3. Local application 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Neighbors, Friends</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluation 2. Comparison 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. <u>Neighbors, Friends</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluation 2. Comparison
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <u>Govt. Agencies</u> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <u>Govt. Agencies</u> <p>All types of change- especially new techniques or operations and new enterprises.</p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <u>Govt. Agencies</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Evaluation <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. All types of change. b. Especially detailed evaluation. 2. How and When 3. Local Application 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <u>Govt. Agencies</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interpretation 2. Evaluation in relation to conditions. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. <u>Govt. Agencies</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Interpretation 2. Evaluation in relation to conditions.
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. <u>Neighbors, Friends</u> <p>Those outside community.</p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. <u>Neighbors, Friends</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Those in community 2. Changes in materials and existing operations. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. <u>Neighbors, Friends</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farm Papers and Magazines. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How to do it. b. Little local application. 2. Radio-TV-Newspaper 3. <u>Mass Media</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. When 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. <u>Mass Media</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farm Papers and Magazines. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How to do it. b. Little local application. 2. Radio-TV-Newspaper 3. <u>Mass Media</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. When 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3. <u>Mass Media</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Farm Papers and Magazines. <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. How to do it. b. Little local application. 2. Radio-TV-Newspaper 3. <u>Mass Media</u> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. When
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. <u>Salesmen</u> <p>More important than at information stage.</p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. <u>Salesmen</u> <p>Seed, materials and equipment</p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. <u>Salesmen</u> <p>Seed, materials and equipment.</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. When and How 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. <u>Salesmen</u> <p>Seed, materials and equipment.</p> 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. <u>Salesmen</u> <p>Seed, materials and equipment</p>

SEQUENCE IN CUMULATIVE ADOPTION

INNOVATORS

Community

Neighborhood

EARLY ADOPTERS

INFORMAL LEADERS

MAJORITY

NON-ADOPTERS

- | | | | | |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|---|--|--|
| 1. Large farms | 1. Above average size farm | 1. Higher education | 1. Usually not innovator | Less education |
| 2. High status | 2. Status loss established | 2. Younger | 2. Earlier & more adoptions than average | Older |
| 3. Very active in community | 3. Above average socio-econ. | 3. Higher social participation | 3. More papers and farm magazines | Less social participation |
| 4. Established families | 4. Information | 4. More bulletins & Newspapers | 4. More papers and farm magazines | Fewer bulletins |
| 5. Information | 4. Ag. Agencies | 5. More magazines & Newspapers | 5. Community activities | Fewer papers & magazines |
| A. College-direct | B. Neighbors & friends | 6. More active in co-ops and gov't programs | 6. Extra-community activities | Less active in co-ops and gov't programs |
| B. Ag. Agencies | C. Farm magazines | | 7. Elected positions-local gov't and farm programs | |

Many contacts outside community not named by other farmers as a person to go to for advice on farming.

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